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Platte River Management Plan



SLEEPING BEAR DUNES

National Lakeshore • Michigan

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Platte River Management Plan

August 1992

SLEEPING BEAR DUNES

National Lakeshore • Michigan

United States Department of the Interior • National Park Service • Denver Service Center

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INTRODUCTION

Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, a 71,000-acre area along the northeastern shore of Lake Michigan (see Region map), was established by Congress on October 21, 1970 (Public Law 91-479, 84 Stat. 1075) to preserve "outstanding natural features, including forests, beaches, dune formation, and ancient glacial phenomena . . . for the benefit, inspiration, education, recreation, and enjoyment of the public." The National Park Service is further mandated by the Organic Act of 1916 to provide for public use of the resources of each unit of the national park system in such a way as to leave them unimpaired for future generations.

The Platte River area of Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore includes the lower 5 miles of the Platte River from the lakeshore boundary just upstream of Michigan Highway 22 (called M-22) bridge to the mouth at Lake Michigan (see Vicinity and Activity Areas maps). The purpose of this *Platte River Management Plan* is to define management, interpretation, and development strategies that will minimize conflicts between user groups, promote visitor safety, and maximize protection of the natural and cultural resources of the Platte River corridor.

The 1979 *General Management Plan* for Sleeping Bear Dunes included a *Development Concept Plan* for the Platte River corridor. The decisions made in these plans include relocating the entrance to the Platte River campground and constructing a launch for limited-horsepower motorboats on Loon Lake. Both of these actions are underway as a part of the total Platte River campground redesign project.

Other decisions from the *General Management Plan* that carry forward into this plan include the long-range goal of providing a canoe livery, picnic facilities, and a central parking area on the south side of the Platte River as private properties become available for acquisition, improving pedestrian access between the Platte River campground and the livery, providing small parking areas and short trails to the Platte River along Lake Michigan Road, and improving the facilities at the mouth of the Platte River in cooperation with the state of Michigan, Benzie County, and Lake Township. These proposals are described in greater detail in the "Management Plan" section of this plan (see appendix A for cost estimates).

The National Park Service will continue to cooperate with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) concerning the salmon fisheries operation and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service with the application of lampreycide in the lower Platte River every four to five years as needed to control the lamprey eel in the Great Lakes.

Regulations and statutes regarding state and federal threatened and endangered species, floodplains, and/or wetlands, and critical dunes have influenced the decisions in this plan.

The National Park Service does not own all the land within the Platte River corridor. Benzie County owns and maintains Lake Michigan Road (county road 708), and the boat launch ramp. At the mouth of the Platte River, Lake Township owns a 2-acre park with picnic facilities, a well, a small parking lot, and a canoe pull-out area. The Michigan DNR owns 161.18 acres surrounding the fish weir and access road from Lake Michigan Road. There are also 39 residential properties and a canoe livery within the corridor.

The NPS regional director has concluded that implementation of this plan will not result in significant impacts on the human environment and has prepared a finding of no significant impact (see appendix B). Compliance with section 7 of the Endangered Species Act and section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act have been completed. Archeological surveys are being conducted in the Platte River campground.



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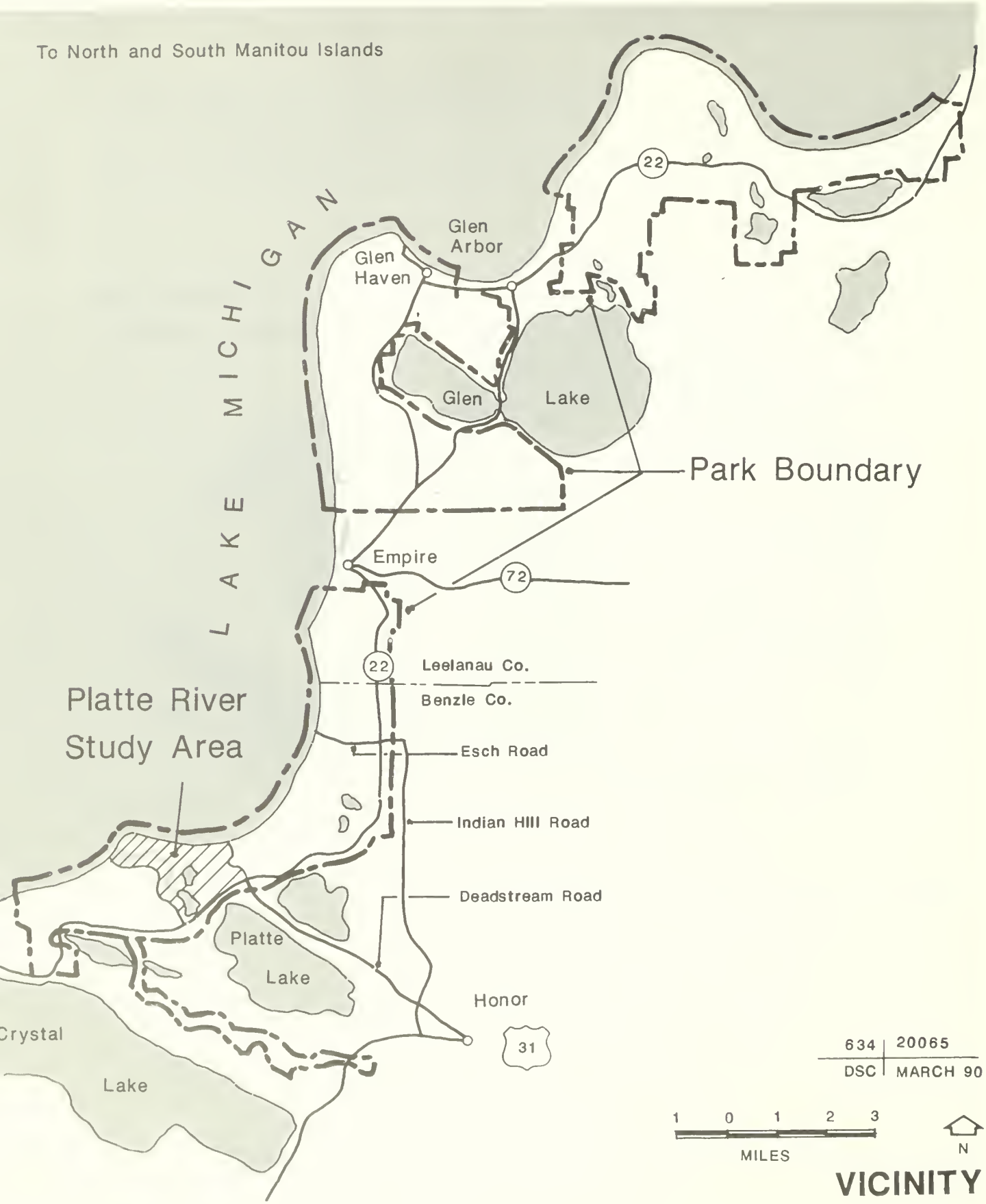
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REGION

SLEEPING BEAR DUNES NATIONAL LAKESHORE

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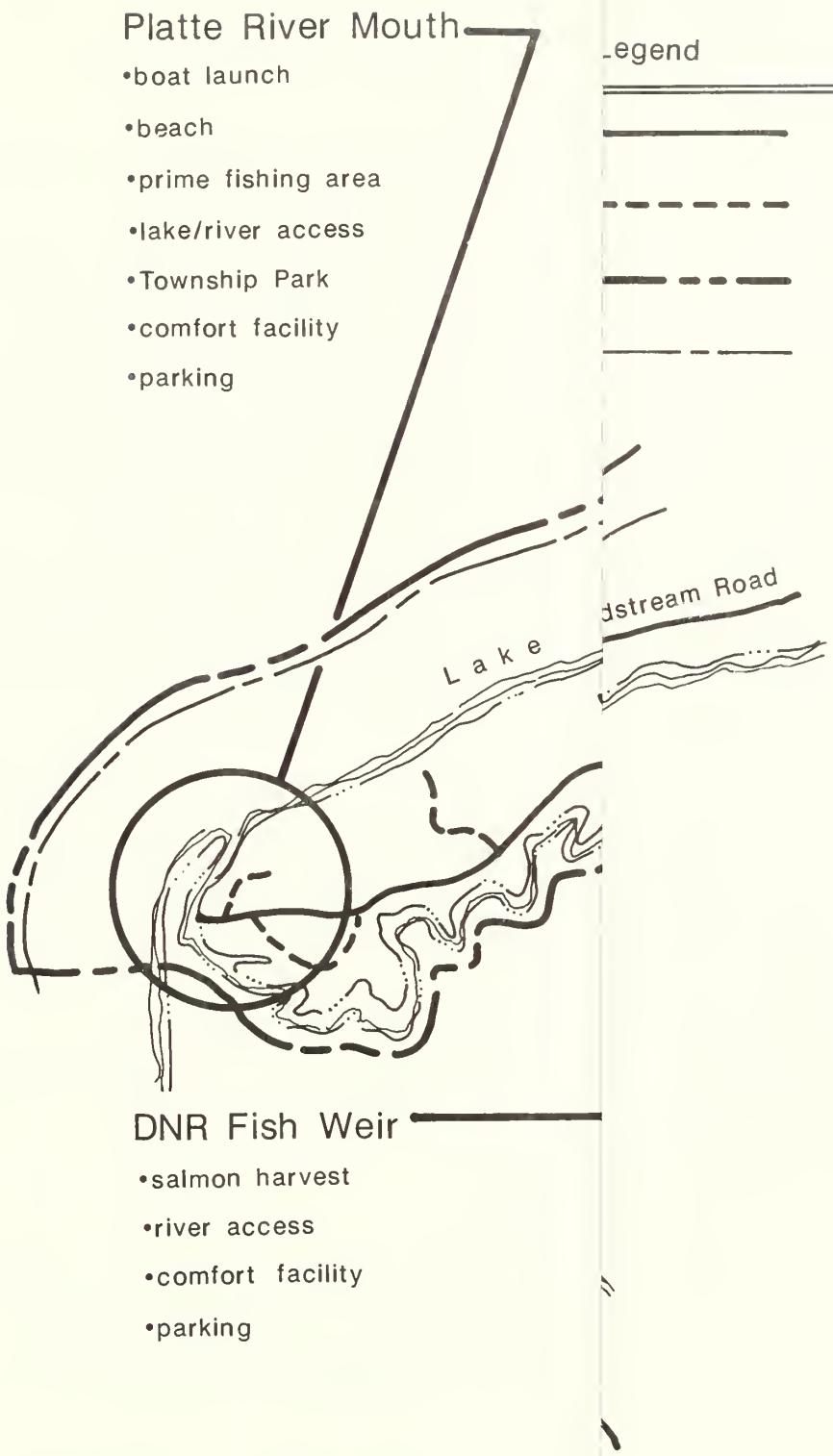


VICINITY

PLATTE RIVER CORRIDOR

SLEEPING BEAR DUNES NATIONAL LAKESHORE

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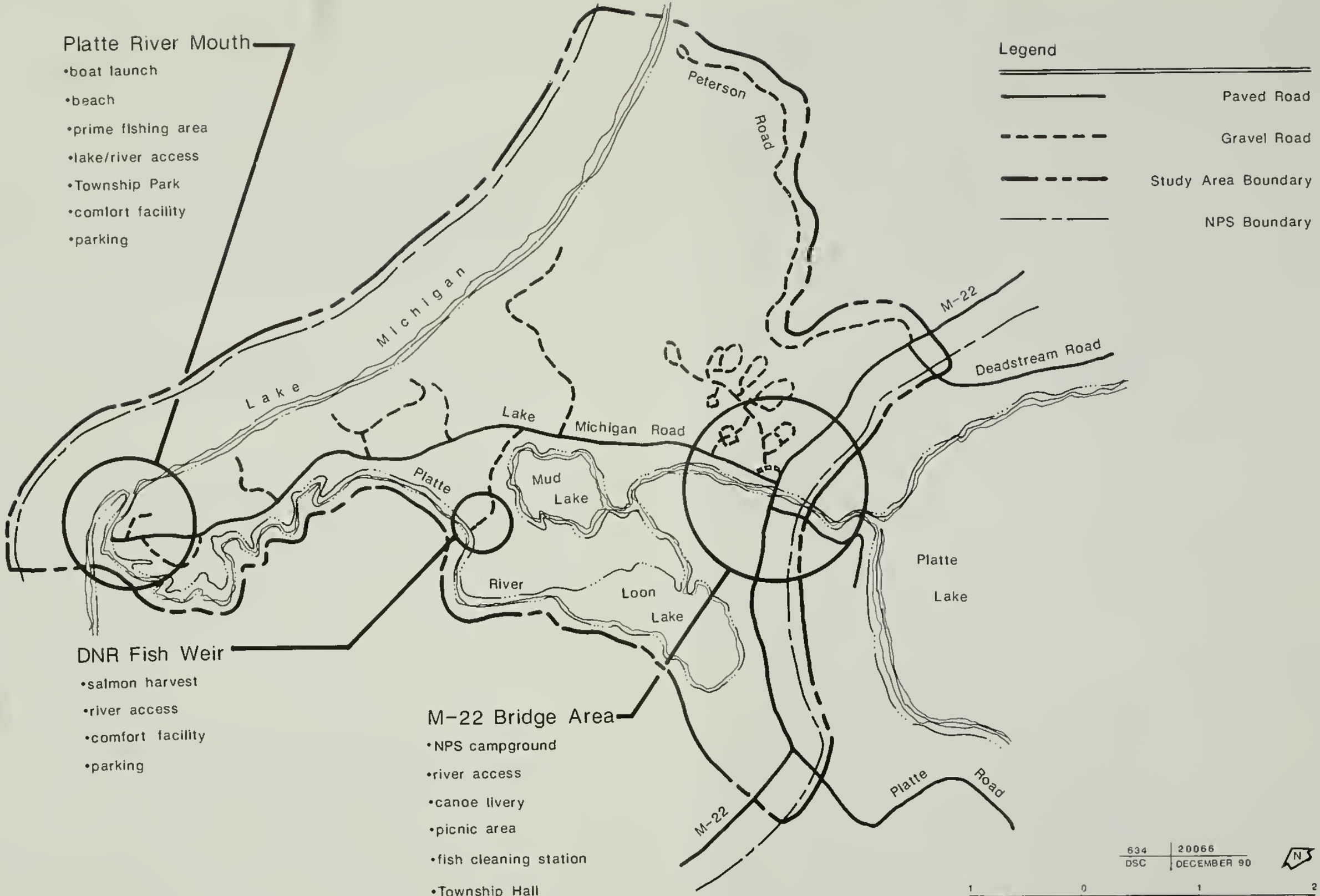


ACTIVITY AREAS

PLATTE RIVER CORRIDOR

SLEEPING BEAR DUNES NATIONAL LAKESHORE

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR/NATIONAL PARK SERVICE



ACTIVITY AREAS

PLATTE RIVER CORRIDOR

SLEEPING BEAR DUNES NATIONAL LAKESHORE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR/NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

THE PLATTE RIVER CORRIDOR AND ITS ENVIRONMENT

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PLATTE RIVER CORRIDOR

The significant resources of the Platte River unit include Nipissing Dunes, glacial embayment features (ridges, swales, etc.), foredune flora (including the federally threatened pitcher's thistle, (*Cirsium pitcheri*), well-illustrated plant succession, pine/oak/aspen forest, water-related wildlife habitat (Platte, Loon, and Mud lakes), fish (including trout and salmon), and striking views of the Platte River area from a variety of access roads. The Platte Bay shoreline provides potential breeding habitat and nesting cover for the federally endangered piping plover (*Charadrius melodus*). The federally threatened bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) and endangered peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus anatum*) are known to be present in the Platte River area.

The Michigan DNR has designated almost the entire Platte River corridor as part of a critical dune area under the provision of the Sand Dunes Protection and Management Act of 1989 (see appendix C). This act provides for protection of critical dunes through the regulation of construction activities and topographic alterations within the dunes (see appendix D).

VISITOR ACTIVITIES

The most popular recreational activities in the Platte River corridor are water-based. The river provides exceptional opportunities for canoeing, boating, tubing, fishing, and swimming; 95% of river boating is with nonmotorized craft. The river is especially popular during autumn, when salmon migrate upstream from Lake Michigan. Steelhead fishing is also quite popular during the spring of the year.

Fishing in Platte Bay is popular with a small proportion of corridor users, but the intensity of use varies both seasonally and on multiyear cycles depending on the frequency of stocking and natural fluctuations in fish populations.

EXISTING DEVELOPMENT

In the M-22/Platte River Bridge area, a privately owned canoe livery provides canoe and inner tube rental, groceries, gas, and souvenir sales. On the northeast side of the river, the NPS Platte River campground provides RV, conventional, walk-in, and group campsites, restrooms, showers, a trailer dump station, an amphitheater, and a fish cleaning station. There is also a picnic area, canoe/boat launch ramp, maintenance facility, and ranger station.

The area surrounding the Michigan DNR fish weir contains a large parking area and primitive outhouses. The structures associated with fish harvesting are fenced. The access road to this area is gated and locked except during the fish harvesting season when visitors are allowed to enter the area and observe the harvesting operation.

El Dorado Park, owned by Benzie County, is an informal vehicle pulloff site off Lake Michigan Road that provides easy and convenient access to the Platte River.

Development at the mouth of the Platte River is a cooperative effort between Lake Township, Benzie County, and the National Park Service. Lake Township Park includes a pavilion, a parking area, and a well. Benzie County is responsible for the three-lane boat launch ramp at the end of Lake Michigan Road. The National Park Service provides additional parking and a small restroom facility.

MANAGEMENT PLAN

PLAN CONCEPT

Visitors will be able to experience adventure along the Platte River corridor with a moderate degree of social interaction during peak use hours, or with a feeling of solitude during nonpeak hours. They will also continue to enjoy water-oriented recreation. Interpretation will be emphasized. Interpretive topics to be developed include fisheries, the riparian ecosystem, resource protection, safety (especially as it relates to shallow water boating), and environmental awareness. Possible interpretive media that could be used include waterproof, self-guided brochures; waterproof tape player and cassette; wayside exhibits; traveler information stations; and guided canoe trips.

GENERAL

Several agencies own portions of the Platte River corridor. The National Park Service will continue to cooperate with these agencies for coordinated management of the area. These responsibilities are as follows:

The Michigan DNR is currently maintaining the salmon fishing program and owns and operates the fish weir.

Benzie County currently owns and maintains El Dorado Park.

Lake Township is responsible for the Lake Township Park at the mouth of the Platte River.

The Michigan State Highway Department is responsible for M-22 and the bridge over the Platte River.

Where feasible, access for visitors with disabilities will be provided throughout the Platte River corridor and at selected fishing sites.

A species inventory will be conducted and critical areas flagged prior to any construction actions. All construction activities will be required to avoid impacts on any plant populations and communities.

A carry-in, carry-out trash policy will be established. Trash bags will be available and will be designed in such a way that they can be secured to a canoe or boat to prevent accidental loss. An interpretive message will be printed on the bags to further encourage individual responsibility for maintaining a clean environment. Trash receptacles will be available at the river mouth to deposit trash bags.

Benzie County will be encouraged to implement its proposal to add a bicycle lane to the shoulder of Lake Michigan Road to increase the safety for both bicyclists and motorists. The National Park Service will provide bicycle racks at selected parking areas.

M22/PLATTE RIVER BRIDGE AREA

A canoe livery will continue to be provided that will offer canoe rentals, food services, gas, and souvenirs. Appropriate parking and safe access for visitors desiring to use this service will be provided.

The former KOA campground will be restored to a natural appearance.

Pending approval of the Michigan Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration, a footbridge adjacent to the M-22 bridge will be constructed across the Platte River. This bridge will provide safe access for pedestrians between the Platte River campground and picnic area and the canoe livery. It will also provide a connection for the long-term goal of a parkwide trail system. Currently, hikers and cross-country skiers on trails on either side of the Platte River can only cross the river on the M-22 bridge and occasionally at the DNR weir.

Many people float the river in inner tubes between the livery near the M-22 bridge and Kittendorf Landing. A hardened trail will be provided leading back to the livery parking area.

A primitive, boat-in campsite will be designated on the southwest side of Loon Lake when the current use and occupancy permits expire in 1997.

PLATTE RIVER

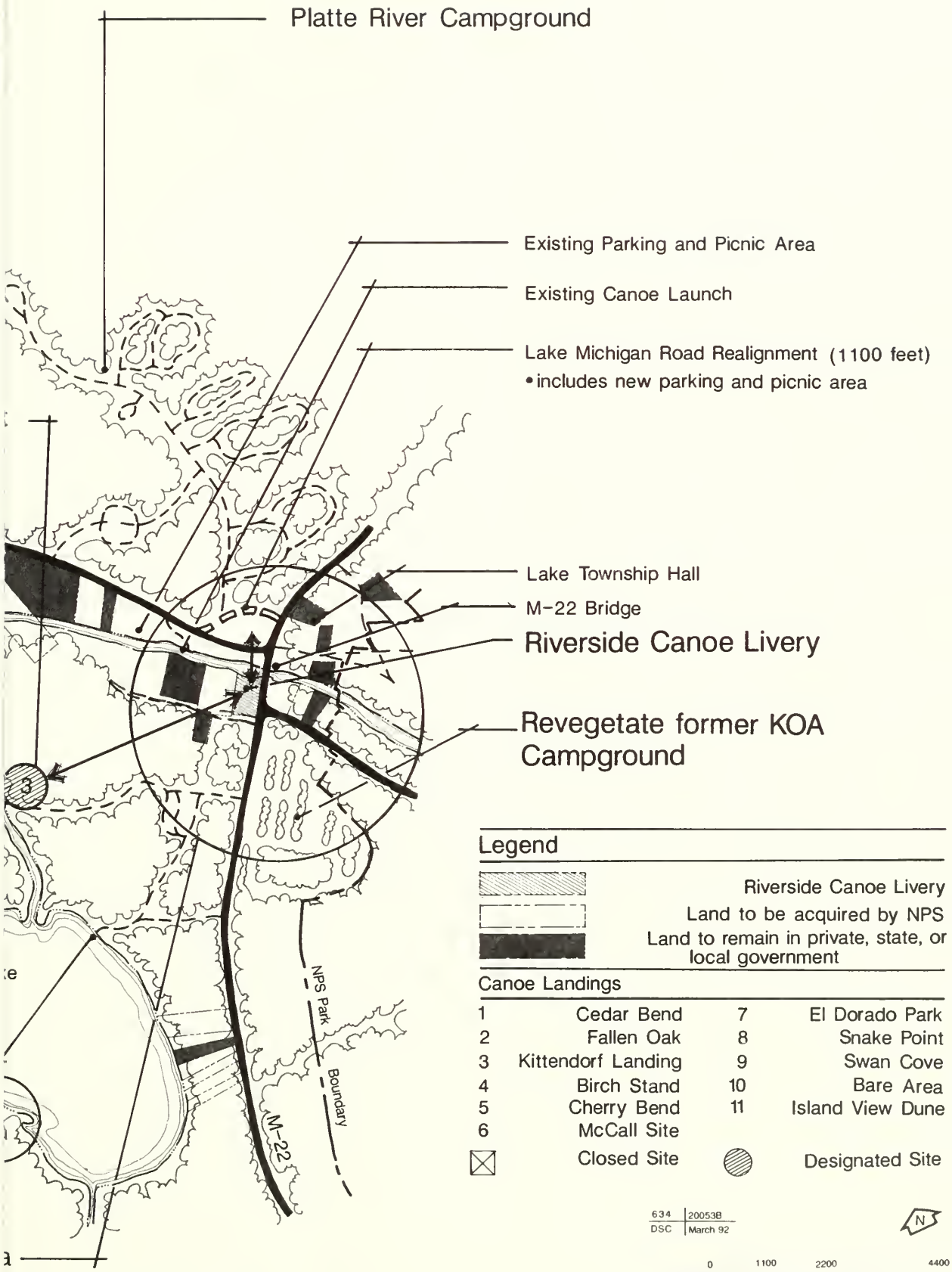
The National Park Service will continue to monitor fishing and canoe landing sites for resource impacts. A monitoring system will be developed to collect data on the volume and distribution of river use to ensure a continued high quality visitor experience.

Three of the existing 11 canoe landing sites, as well as the DNR fish weir, will be designated as stopping points (see Management Plan - Platte River Corridor map). The remaining eight landing sites will be restored to an untrammeled state. River users will be encouraged to use only the following four sites:

Kittendorf Landing – This site is used primarily by those floating the river in inner tubes. This site will have an information sign and a vault toilet. To provide safe access back to the canoe livery, a trail will be constructed between Kittendorf Landing and the canoe livery.

DNR fish weir – If the Michigan DNR approves, the National Park Service will work with the DNR in a cooperative effort to redesign and landscape the DNR fish weir area. The intent is to provide a pleasant stopping place for both river users and motorists. Access for visitors with disabilities will be an integral part of the redesign. Parking areas, picnic tables, fire grates, potable water, trash cans, a vault toilet, and information and interpretation will be provided. Landscaping will minimize the visibility of automobiles by river users.

El Dorado Park – If Benzie County approves, the National Park Service will work with the county in a cooperative effort to redesign and landscape this site. The intent is to

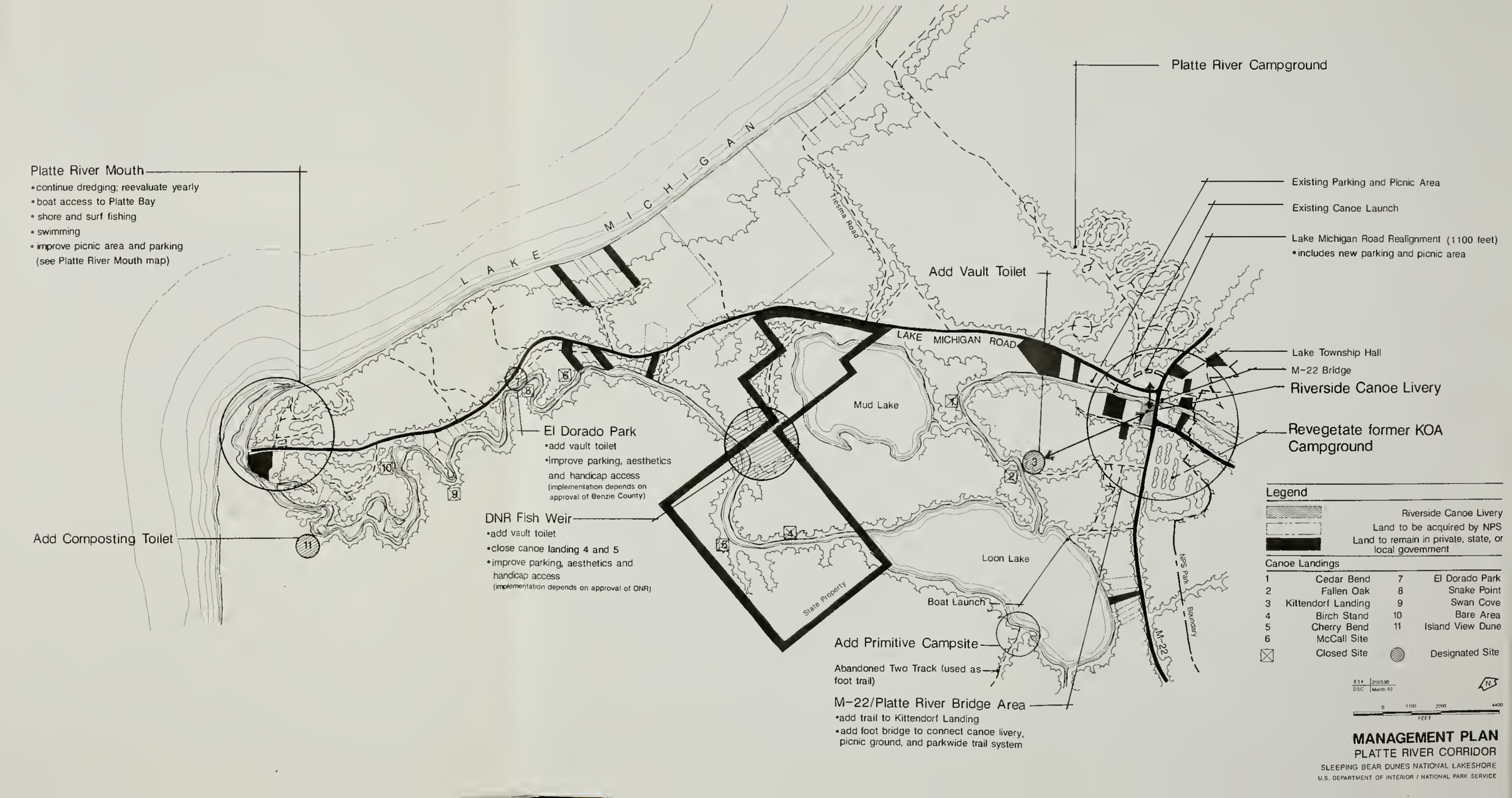


MANAGEMENT PLAN

PLATTE RIVER CORRIDOR

SLEEPING BEAR DUNES NATIONAL LAKESHORE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR / NATIONAL PARK SERVICE


Platte River Mouth
•continue dredging; reevaluate yearly
•boat access to Platte Bay
• shore and surf fishing
• swimming
• improve picnic area and parking
(see Platte River Mouth map)
LAKE MICHIGAN
Tiesma Road
Platte River Campground
Existing Parking and Picnic Area
Existing Canoe Launch
Lake Michigan Road Realignment (1100 feet)
•includes new parking and picnic area
Add Vault Toilet
LAKE MICHIGAN ROAD
Lake Township Hall
M-22 Bridge
Riverside Canoe Livery
Revegetate former KOA Campground
Mud Lake
El Dorado Park
•add vault toilet
•improve parking, aesthetics and handicap access
(implementation depends on approval of Benzie County)
DNR Fish Weir
•add vault toilet
•close canoe landing 4 and 5
•improve parking, aesthetics and handicap access
(implementation depends on approval of DNR)
Add Composting Toilet
State Property
Loon Lake
Boat Launch
NPS Park Boundary
M-22
Add Primitive Campsite
Abandoned Two Track (used as foot trail)
M-22/Platte River Bridge Area
•add trail to Kittendorf Landing
•add foot bridge to connect canoe livery, picnic ground, and parkwide trail system
Legend
Riverside Canoe Livery
Land to be acquired by NPS
Land to remain in private, state, or local government
Canoe Landings
1 Cedar Bend
2 Fallen Oak
3 Kittendorf Landing
4 Birch Stand
5 Cherry Bend
6 McCall Site
7 El Dorado Park
8 Snake Point
9 Swan Cove
10 Bare Area
11 Island View Dune
Closed Site
Designated Site
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MANAGEMENT PLAN
PLATTE RIVER CORRIDOR
SLEEPING BEAR DUNES NATIONAL LAKESHORE
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provide a pleasant stopping place for both river users and motorists. The site will have a parking area, a fishing platform parallel to the riverbank, picnic tables, trash cans, a vault toilet, and information and interpretation. Landscaping will minimize the visibility of automobiles by river users.

Island View Dune – A composting toilet will be provided at this site. Interpretation of this unique toilet system will be presented.

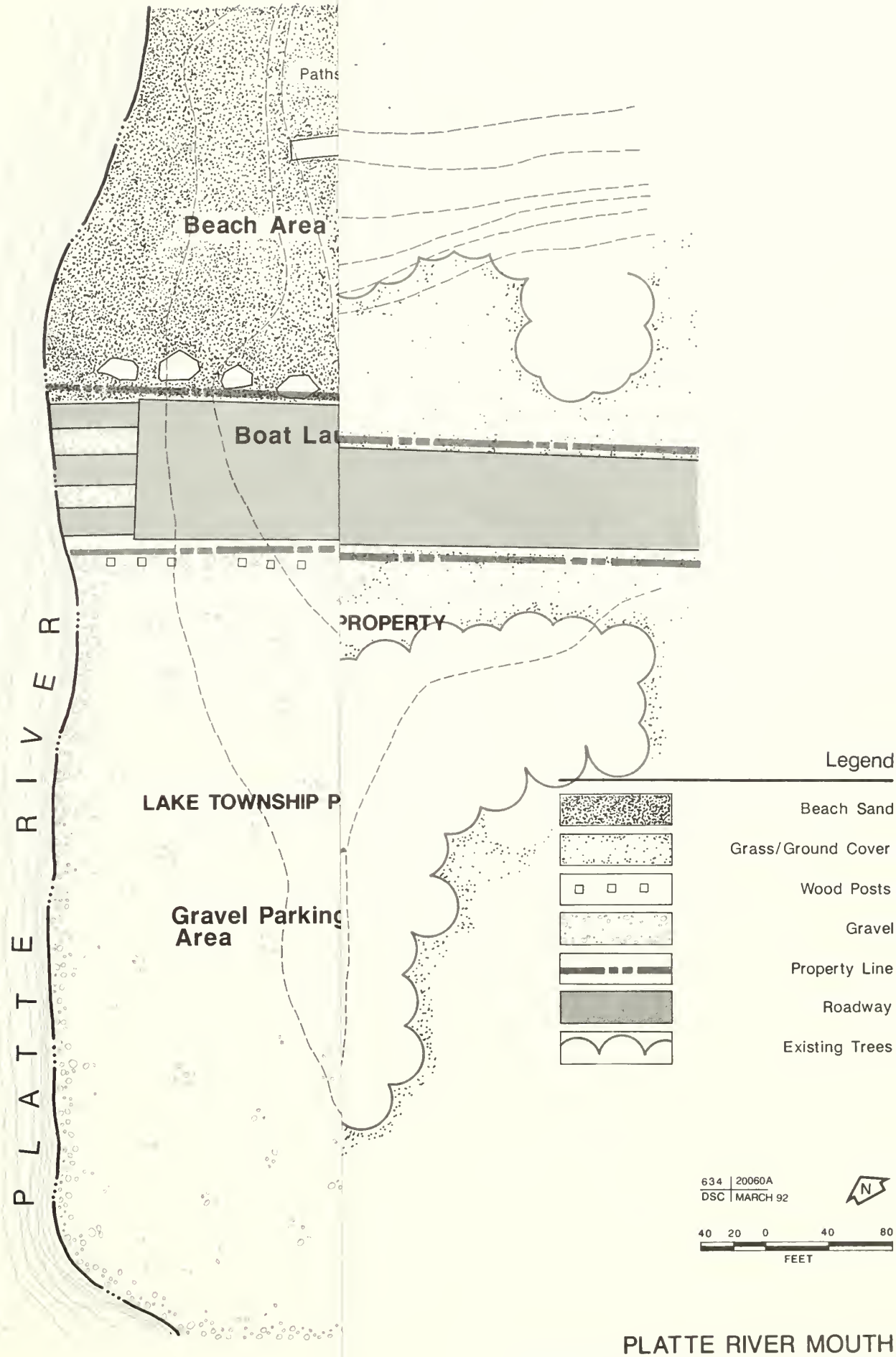
Power boats will continue to be required to adhere to a no-wake policy.

PLATTE RIVER MOUTH

Management of the Platte River mouth area — a cooperative effort between the National Park Service, Benzie County, and Lake Township — will have few changes. As long as fishing use warrants, access to Platte Bay in Lake Michigan will continue to be provided through the fall dredging program conducted by the National Park Service. When fishing use declines to pre-1967 levels, dredging will be discontinued as provided in the 1979 *General Management Plan* and the sand spit at the mouth of the river allowed to resume its natural dynamics.

Swimming between the launch and the river mouth will be regulated as necessary to prevent swimmer/boater conflicts. Additional information will be provided to increase awareness of the hazards of swimming around motorboats. Through interpretation, boaters and swimmers will learn how important it is to be aware of and courteous to each other to avoid accidents.

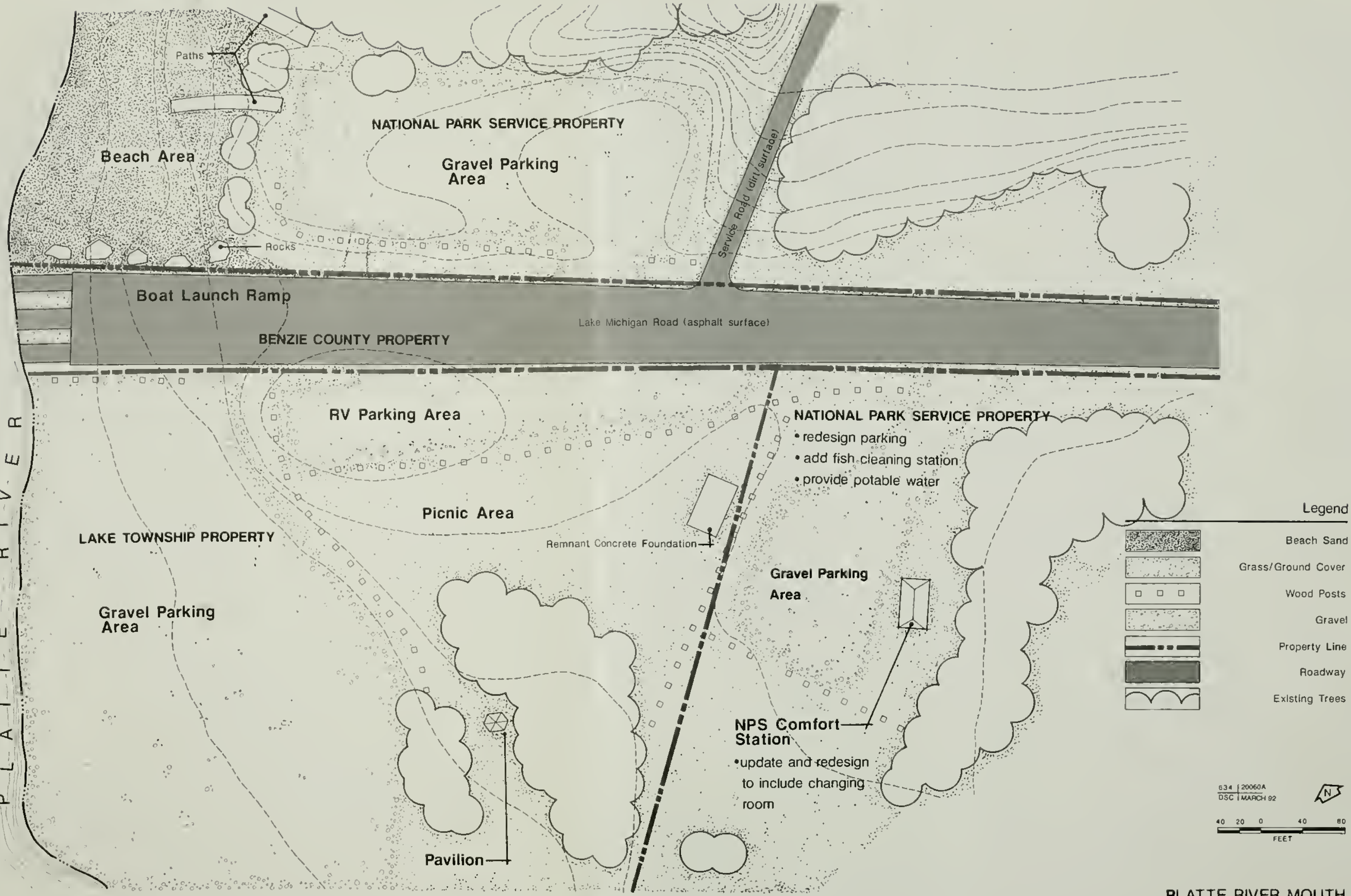
If Lake Township and Benzie County are willing, the National Park Service will cooperate in redesigning and landscaping the entire area. The National Park Service will redesign the area within its own boundaries to include a toilet facility with changing room, potable water, a fish cleaning station, and improved parking (see Platte River Mouth map).



PLATTE RIVER MOUTH

SLEEPING BEAR DUNES NATIONAL LAKESHORE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR / NATIONAL PARK SERVICE



PLATTE RIVER MOUTH

SLEEPING BEAR DUNES NATIONAL LAKESHORE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR / NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

APPENDIX A: COST ESTIMATES

Costs presented here are gross, Class "C" estimates based on the NPS estimating guide (April 1991 through October 1994). These costs are conceptual in nature for the purposes of long-range programming and budgeting. They include not only construction cost estimates, but also costs for project planning, project supervision, and contingencies. These cost estimates will be refined for each project at the preliminary design stage.

Item	Cost
Development	
50-car parking	$ 115,000
Revegetate KOA campground	54,000
Platte River footbridge (attached to M-22 bridge)	17,000
Trail (1/2 mi. by 3 ft.)	15,000
Formalize canoe pullout sites	115,000
Primitive campsite	2,000
Redesign DNR weir sites	119,000
Redesign El Dorado Park	97,000
Fish cleaning station	59,000
Comfort station/changing room	234,000
Interpretive kiosks (3)	18,000
Interpretive signs (3)	9,000
Total	$ 854,000
Staffing	
Interpretation (.05 FTE)	$ 1,000
Maintenance (1.15 FTE)	33,000
Resource Management & Visitor Use (.7 FTE)	15,000
Total (1.9 FTE)	$ 49,000

APPENDIX B

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

PLATTE RIVER MANAGEMENT PLAN
Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore

The National Park Service (NPS) issued a draft Platte River Management Plan/Environmental Assessment (EA) for public review in May 1991. The purpose of the Platte River Management Plan is to define management, interpretation, and development strategies that will minimize conflicts between user groups, promote visitor safety, and maximize protection of the natural and cultural resources of the Platte River corridor. The EA addresses impacts that would arise from four alternative management strategies for the Platte River, ranging from a continuation of existing conditions to emphasizing opportunities for recreational activities involving a moderate degree of social interaction. The proposed action is described in the attached final Platte River Management Plan. The final Platte River Management Plan combines Alternative 3 (preferred) of the draft Plan/EA with Alternative 1 (continuation of existing conditions). Based on the EA, the NPS has arrived at the following conclusions:

Compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (16 U.S.C. 470 as amended) has been completed for the proposed action.

It has been determined in consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service that the proposed action will not adversely affect any Federally listed threatened or endangered species or their critical habitat. This satisfies the requirements of the Endangered Species Act, as amended, (16 U.S.C. 1531-1543).

The assessment has been reviewed, resulting in the following conclusions:

1. Implementation of the proposal will not constitute an action which normally requires the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) (40 CFR 1502.3; 516 DM 6, Appendix 7.3). The proposed action is not a categorical exclusion within the contemplation of 40 CFR 1501.4 and 1508.4.

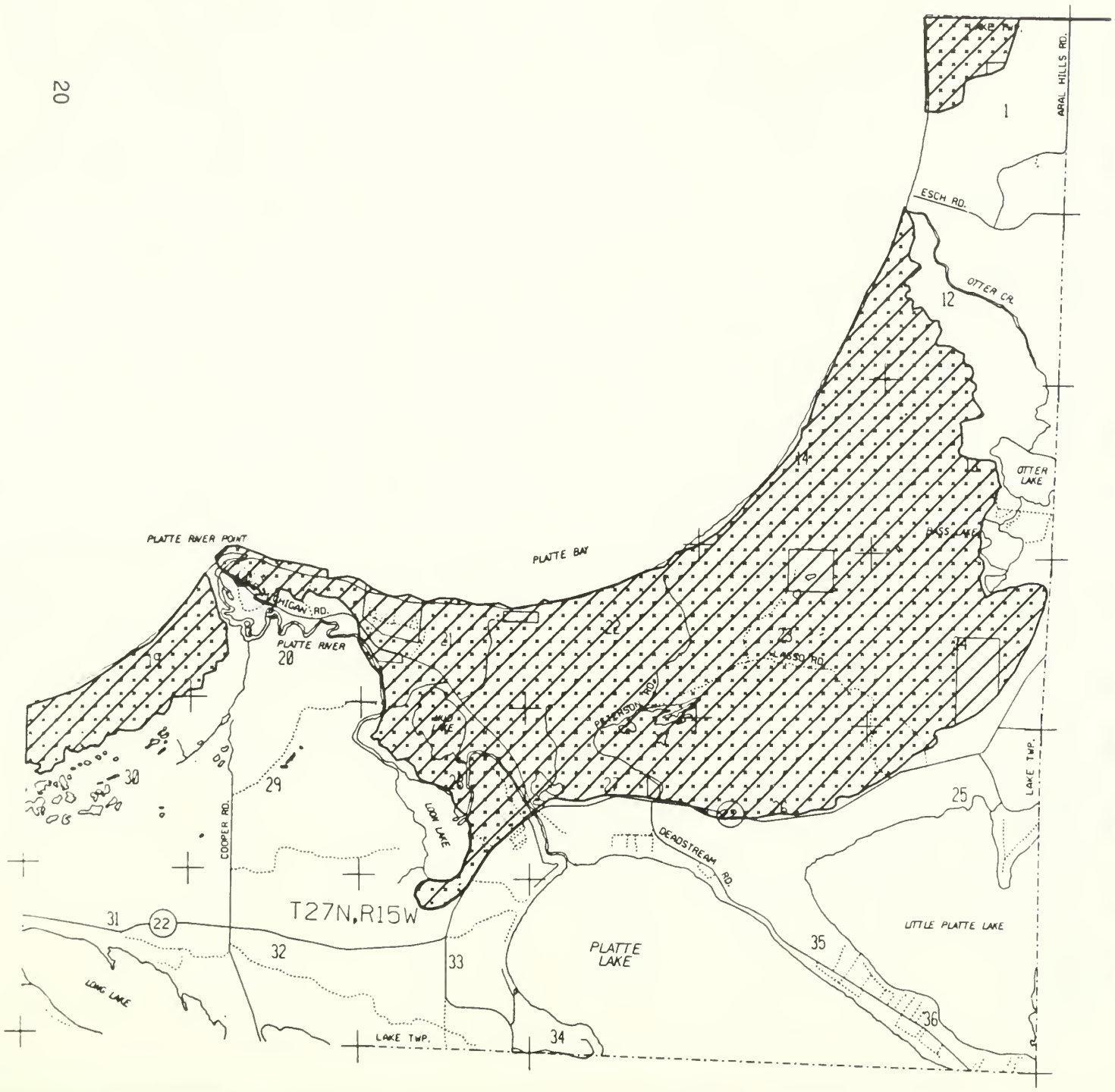
2. Implementation of the proposal will not have a significant (40 CFR 1508.27) effect on the quality of the human environment. Adverse impacts which could occur are expected to be minor and generally short-term in effect. There will be no adverse impacts on the public health or safety; rare, endangered or threatened species; sites listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), or other unique characteristics of the locale or the region. No highly uncertain

or controversial impacts, unique or unknown risks, cumulative effects or elements of precedence were identified. Implementation of the proposal will not violate any Federal, State or local law.

Based on the foregoing, it has been determined that an EIS is not required for this project and therefore, one will not be prepared.

William W. Schenk
Regional Director, Midwest Region

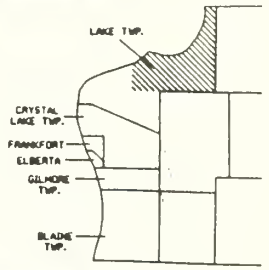
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LAKE TOWNSHIP

CRITICAL DUNE AREAS

BENZIE COUNTY



LEGEND

POLITICAL JURISDICTIONS

BOUNDARIES OF COUNTIES, TOWNSHIPS, AND INCORPORATED CITIES AND VILLAGES AS OF 1987.

PUBLIC LANDS

STATE AND FEDERAL LANDS AND MAJOR LOCAL PARKS WITHIN CRITICAL DUNE AREAS. PUBLIC LANDS ARE CURRENT AS OF 1988.

PROPOSED CRITICAL DUNE AREAS

BARRIER DUNES

BARRIER DUNE FORMATIONS DESIGNATED PURSUANT TO 1976 P.A. 222

AREAS NOT INCLUDED IN DESIGNATED BARRIER DUNE FORMATIONS THAT ARE COMPOSED PRIMARILY OF DUNE SAND AND EXHIBIT SEVERAL DUNE-LIKE CHARACTERISTICS.

EXEMPLARY DUNE ASSOCIATED PLANT COMMUNITIES OUTSIDE DESIGNATED DUNE FORMATIONS. MICHIGAN NATURAL FEATURES INVENTORY REFERENCE CODE INDICATED.

INFORMATION

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APPENDIX D: SUMMARY OF SAND DUNES STATUTES

Public Acts 146 and 147 were signed into law by Governor Blanchard on July 5, 1989. These two statutes together provide protection for Michigan's critical dune areas—those that are the most sensitive to alteration and change.

P.A. 146 provides the procedures for administration of the two statutes. The Act provides that:

The Director will mail notices to each property owner of record in critical dune areas informing them that their property is subject to regulation under the act.

A local unit of government may elect to issue permits for uses in critical dune areas during the interim period from July 5, 1989, to July 1, 1990, the date by which interested communities are to have local zoning ordinances in place. (Communities that were interested in assuming this responsibility were to have adopted a resolution by agreeing to enforce the standards in the act by August 1, 1989.)

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) will issue permits for uses in critical dunes during the interim period if a local unit chooses not to assume permitting authority.

Local units have the option of formulating a zoning ordinance that provides equal or greater protection than the act's model zoning plan. If the local unit does not adopt an ordinance and submit it to the DNR for approval by July 1, 1990, the DNR will assume permitting authority for uses in critical dunes in that community.

A local community may establish a use permit and inspection to defray the cost of administering the act and ordinance.

Uses that have received all necessary state and local permits by July 5, 1989, are exempt from the act.

Provisions in local ordinances may be developed for the continuance, completion, extension, and substitution of existing nonconforming uses.

P.A. 147 contains a model zoning plan that provides standards for development in critical dune areas. These standards are applied in the review of applications and issuance of permits. Highlights include the following:

Unless a variance is granted, the following uses in a critical dune area are prohibited:

a structure on a slope of 18-25% unless plans are prepared by a registered professional architect or engineer

a use on a slope that is greater than 25%

silvicultural practices, vegetation removal, and uses involving contour changes that are likely to increase erosion, decrease stability, or are more extensive than required to implement a use

Structures must be located behind the crest of the first landward ridge of a critical dune that is not a foredune. If construction occurs within 100 feet of the crest, the applicant must show that the proposed use will meet specific standards to ensure that the stability of the dune is maintained.

Local units that have assumed the administrative responsibilities under P.A. 146 may issue variances under specific guidelines for nonconforming lots of record.

The act provides for DNR review of all "special use projects." Special use projects are defined as any industrial or commercial use regardless of size, a multifamily use of more than 3 acres, and multifamily use of 3 acres or less if the density of use is greater than 4 individual residences per acre. Local units with approved ordinances may review applications for special use projects, and forward the application with their proposed decision to the DNR for review. The local unit's proposed decision may be affirmed, modified, or reversed by the DNR.

All permit applications for special use projects must include an environmental assessment.

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